

1 JUN 1949

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TOP SECRET

State Dept. declassification & release instructions on file

GENERAL

1. British requests US moral support in defending Hong Kong--
Foreign Minister Bevin has informed Secretary of State
Acheson that his Government regards a firm British intention
to defend Hong Kong as vital to the whole Far Eastern situation
and has specifically asked whether the British would have the
moral support of the US in taking active measures to insure
Hong Kong's defense. Bevin stated, regarding the "eventual
disposition" of Hong Kong, that the UK does not refuse either
to discuss the matter or to have the UN discuss it, but intends
to resist any Chinese Communist attempt to take Hong Kong
by force.

S-75

Bevin indicated that the British do not anticipate a
Chinese Communist attack on Hong Kong before September
at the earliest and revealed that the British are dispatching
substantial land, sea, and air reinforcements to the Far East-
ern forces, which are expected by September to be able to
resist any Chinese Communist attack. The British, according
to Bevin, recognize the serious difficulties involved in the
dispatch of these forces, in view of its effect on Western Union
and the strategic reserves in Germany and the Mediterranean,
but believe that the risks must be accepted. After pointing
out that an attack on Hong Kong would constitute aggression
under the UN charter and would justify a British appeal to the
Security Council, Bevin expressed the hope that the US and
the Commonwealth countries would give the UK moral support
as a contribution to a joint resistance to Communist expansion.

2. Italian concern over unilateral British action in Libya--Italian
Premier De Gasperi has expressed to US Ambassador Dunn
his concern over reported British plans for an independent
Cyrenaica. De Gasperi points out that Italy has officially de-
clared an intention to stand by the Bevin-Sforza agreement on

S-75

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disposition of the colonies and declares that such unilateral British action would have a catastrophic effect on Italian public opinion. De Gasperi believes that such action would cause the resignation of Italian Foreign Minister Sforza and would profoundly affect the future of western European co-operation.

(CIA Comment: De Gasperi fears that such unilateral British action would practically preclude Italian chances for attaining trusteeship over Tripolitania. The carrying out of the British plans would further undermine Foreign Minister Sforza's prestige, already damaged by his inability to obtain a favorable solution at the last UN session, and might cause his resignation.)

THE AMERICAS

3. BOLIVIA: Government threatened by combined opposition--

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[redacted] PIR, the leftist party controlling the Bolivian Railroad Federation, has decided to call a nationwide strike and that workers on one important line are already out. [redacted] the government is resolved to continue all-out resistance to the strikers even to the extent of declaring martial law.

(CIA Comment: Although the Bolivian government is now in an extremely precarious position as a result of the PIR decision to support the tin-mine strikes, the army, which has so far been loyal to the administration, remains the key to political stability. If the army is subverted by the combined PIR-MNR forces, the resulting state of chaos would probably continue until these two groups could establish a coalition government. A government dominated by either of these groups would be anti-US.)

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